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# The Parent *versus* the State

I am much honoured by being asked to address the members of an Association whose mandate I like to be, organise, educate, differentiate & whose working idea is, in ~~the phrase~~ Mephrasing F.D. Maurice's, 'the family is the unit of the nation'. The older one gets, the more one sees how beautiful & excellent is the natural, some of us think the divine, organisation of the family; & it would seem that nations prosper or fall into decay according to how they hold the family bond. We know very well how states decay when licentious living on the part of the governing classes makes light of family life; but the point that claims our attention first now is that when a State arrogates to itself the functions of parents, from utilitarian

to the bread or potatoes of the meal

even from philanthropic motives, it is transgressing the first law by which nations live. The life of the State is bound up not in that of the individuals but in that of the families of which it is composed.

The most obvious functions of parents are to feed, clothe, shelter & educate their children. Birds & beasts bring up their families & the nesting season offers a continually repeated & delightful parable to men.

The family table, be it never so poor, is the centre of amenities nil elsewhere not to be had elsewhere. The herring, or the morsel of bacon, shared by way of a 'relish' rather than eaten as food, offers something over above the chemical elements proper to them. The mother gives every most other share,

Little Bill's baby forwardness is laughed at, various ~~the~~ small jokes go round & manners & morals of a third are observed. The best cooked & served dinner that can be given to children at their school is a poor, dry, cold, meal by comparison. So of clothes; we others may not approve of the 'fervor' that 'murver' has somehow come by for her ~~little girls~~ Hannah's but that 'fervor' means dignity, self-respect, mother's love, twenty precious things warm & comforting that the neatest school uniform cannot afford.

If we want to unravell a bit, let us turn over the pages of Punch for a year. Phil May, at any rate, knew that the children of the very poor are generous full of friendship, love, pity, & joy in the beautiful & tenderness for the weak. Can the State give scope for all this?

The State has no big baby for the little mother-girl to struggle under, or little 'Brother' for the scarcely bigger boy to bear (bleed by the hand) a person of dignity though in ~~rag~~ rags. Perhaps we grow more by what we endure than by what we get, & the small urchin who sells newspapers in the rain, brings home more than the pennies he earns.

But this, it will be said, is to assume that the very poor are also very good. No, but perhaps: they are like the rest of us, good & bad; their good becomes very good because they are poor. I venture to say that few of us know more than a very small percentage of our well-to-do neighbors among the very poor of our acquaintance; & I suppose that because the poor are congested in

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our great cities, they are therefore unworthy to bring up their families. ~~Scenes of arrogance~~ Better a dinner of herbs where love is than a [illegible] or at the table of the State.

I am all democrat in these days, be an all-killing Kay, down on lions, in some measure, for the old "priest of Rome, the poor man entering air [illegible] heights. We are the persons who count!

But, it will be asked, how does all this apply to the giving or selling of one or two good meals a day to the children. The children get the meals but they miss what I boldly call the amenities of the home-hable. A little establishment is set up, the children are definitely taught to be self-seeking, greedy, to put home in the second place, their own comfort in the first.

In a week or two it will be found that the family bond will be relaxed, there will be no longer the frank confidence between parent & child which is one of the compensations of the poor & very soon the children will evade the tiresome little duties which they owe to the parents who feed them but scarcely to those who make over the care of them to the state. But a deeper question lies at the root of this, of the family life & state aid. Whatever be our party or our creed, we stand on one side or the other of a broad line of demarcation. We say with our lips & believe in our hearts that man either does, or that he does not, live by bread alone. If we think that he does not live by bread only, that his morale is more than his physique, we shall be very wary as to how we take him from the educative conditions of family life.

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If bread be scarce & butter scarcer, there are still friendliness & affection, helpfulness & service, & the wise philosophy of the poor. Still 'life is sweet, brother', still 'there's night & day, brother, both sweet things; sun ~~moon~~ moon & stars brother, all sweet things'. 'There's likewise a wind on the heath, life is very sweet, brother.' That is, where there is liberty, brother child, or old man, is provided for more or less by the State, the consciousness of ~~liber~~ liberty is gone & we ~~should~~ have no longer that fine sense of dignity, property & possession in each other which characterise the very poor & the very rich for both are independent.

If we clear things like these out of court, if we maintain that man doth live by bread alone, why then the state will arrogate ~~to~~ itself the duty of bringing up a fitter generation & will fail miserably. It will feed the children & give them bread only. ~~But~~ It will educate them with that utilitarian education which some ones believe to

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be profoundly immoral. It will give them, by way of religion, ~~such~~ dry bones of ethical education ~~as such~~ should make them serviceable but itself will deprive them of all that should give impulse & enthusiasm to life. Make it that an underlying tenet of this Association is that man doth not live by bread alone & in proportion as it raises the full bearing of this article of belief, will be its effectiveness in preserving the family & building up the nation.

But it will be said this is a one-sided view, the difficulty comes in when men & women cannot, or will not, take care of their children or of their aged ~~parents~~ parents. But the vast majority of persons & children are persons of good will & honest purpose. That they are ready to sustain their children is proved by the fact that the inquiries instituted a few months ~~ago~~ by the L.C.C. issued in ~~a report~~ the verdict of Dr. Kerr that the children of London were not ~~underfed~~ underfed but unwisely fed under bad conditions.

The cry of lack of bread searches all our hearts. It is idle to suggest that to feed the hungry is not the first duty of state individual but in our eager pity it is well to remember that no worse calamity can befall a State than a lowered sense of parental duty & also, that there are things more satisfying than bread. Visiting a ~~Jewish~~ Club for Jewish girls some time ago, I was greatly struck by the gentle & courteous manners of the girls. I said to the lady who directs the club, "but these must be all well-to-do girls", "you do not reach the very poor". "Most of the girls" she answered "are very very poor; many of them will sit down to their first meal today when we have tea. I expected to be able to distinguish the hungry girls by greediness, but all of them behaved with equal propriety. None of them snatched or ~~stuff~~ stuffed, or behaved otherwise ~~that~~ than do all well-brought up people at table. These girls formed the social idea more sustaining than bread & O think there is danger in the idea that persons must be well fed before we can expect them to be well-



If this be so the remedy lies in the education of parents rather than in the intervention of the state. The children who can properly be regarded as children of the state i.e. chiefly are those whose parents are criminals by profession, habitual inebriates or who are under the periodic insanity of habitual drunkenness. These children are properly under the care of the state which should do what it can to engraft into its harder methods something of the culture & nurture that the children of even the very poor derive from family life. Probably one function of the Constitutional Association will be the delimitation of the powers of the State to supersede parents in the care of their children.

The "Life Story of Will Crooks, MP." is what we call a 'human document' of no common value but perhaps the lessons to be read between the lines are more precious than those ~~the eminent subject of the biography~~ Mr Crooks himself emphasises. Here is a picture of a mother of the poorest, so poor that she & her husband & children could

behind or interested in anything but their own immediate needs. We know how a national joy, or a national grief, can fill all hearts to the entire forgetfulness of personal needs. I venture to press this point because, though it is our first duty to feed the hungry, we may not postpone the duty of nourishing the mind with ideas until the body is well-fed. The two works are of equal importance & should proceed together.



not keep out of the workhouse, though they ~~soon~~ can. toggel out of it as soon as they could."

"'God only knows, God only will know, how my mother worked & wept,' says Crooks. 'With it all she brought up seven of us to be decent useful men & women. She was everything to us. I owe to her what little schooling I got, for, though she could neither read nor write herself, she would often remark that that should never be said of any of her children..... I can picture her now as I used to see her when I awoke in the night making ~~out~~ oil-skin coats by candle-light in our single room. I remember, though I was I meant it from the very bottom of my heart when I used to whisper to myself, as I peeped at her from the little box-~~bed~~ bedstead by the wall, 'Wait till I'm a man! ~~I'll~~ won't I work for my mother when I'm a man!'"

Of course we all wish that 'Will Crooks' had been better fed, that changes had been rung upon the bread & treacle of all ~~those~~ his meals.

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But would it have been well for him to have been fed more or less at the public expense? to have been without the heroic impulse he got watching his mother's patient toil? — an impulse which in after days was to do such fine service to the country. The severe hardships of his youth, scarcely seemed to have affected him physically but should we have had the merry jibe, the ~~to~~ Crown & independent carriage which we admire in the Labour Member, has it not been that through all their struggles, the crippled father, the toiling mother & the seven children preserved a sense of family dignity & unity.

An association ~~armed~~ with a sense of the inviolability of the family must organize, educate in order to propagate its ~~doctrine~~ doctrine. The means are obvious. Should not every village & every urban district have its constitutional club so framed as to admit members from all classes & to exclude none. The Socialists have shown the way. The Club rooms, the schools should be obtained for the expense,

When ~~not~~ neither school nor barn is available, an iron room might be put up for £100 or 20 – a sum which an attractive programme would secure in most neighbourhoods. Having got the people, the business of the Association would probably be to educate them. I think, I come to the reason why I have been honoured by an invitation to speak to you today.

1/A The common notion of education is, is that it is a long wearisome process with often enough little apparent result. The educated person should have increased joy in living, many varied interests, occupations, hobbies. We don't always find that he has these. A Cartesian gentleman, he won't be to be amused when definite education is not forced upon him. It seems safe to infer that the process' idea of education is not satisfactory.

Nurse of the Parent's Union, for which I stand, believes that education is, like the Kingdom of Heaven, a state and a process. For what is the ideal result of education, that result which we fail together with all the labours of our schools? Is it not aptitude for

worthy knowledge can ~~satisfy~~ insatiable appetite for ideas. The tedious process we go through occupying a quarter of a long life is supposed to result in this ~~applied~~ appetite for knowledge or ideas. But does it? We do not seem to produce multitudes of reading people capable of clear thought. Our grand find is that there is no need to reproduce these aptitudes by means of education. They are there already, present in child or man, in young or old. We are all born with a desire for knowledge as keen or as insistent as the appetite for food. Knowledge ~~of~~ ~~in touch with~~ begets ideas.

Realising that we give people what they want we skip all manner of elements relative & plunge at once into media~~ry~~ Km.

We educate by means of immediate contact with the best minds throughout

best books. It will be objected that the ~~Star~~ class we are particularly concerned with have no vocabulary but that is a mistake. Working men express themselves in journalese because they pick up the vocabulary of their newspapers; now the best writers use the plainest, most direct, English and therefore the fittest for education purposes. How would it be if in each of the Constitutional Clubs, we may ~~[illegible]~~ amuse ourselves by conceiving, we've quite a number of deal tables with benches round them. Each table occupied by a group of men (women or of men and) reading & discussing incidentally some book they have chosen as, for example, Plutarch's Julius Caesar & Shakespeare's play, or Macaulay's Essay on Clive or Warren Hastings or Kidd's Social Evolution, or Professor

Seeley's Expansion of Empire or Lecky's Map of Life, or



Hilty's Steps of Life or Archdeacon Wilson's Science & the Faith or Adam Bede or Nicholas Nickleby or Wallace's Rivers, ~~or~~ and ~~suppose~~ when any table has finished its book, the whole club give half-an-hour to listening to a resumé of comments by some two or three of the readers, or to an attempt to act a scene from ~~Shakesp~~ a play that has been read or from a Waverley Novel.

~~We shall have secured these things~~

Three things would be secured, the joy of an intellectual stimulus, definite thought, & the joy of expression.

But it would be objected all this is extremely supererogatory & does not further the objects of the Association.

If we take it that education is a state, we may begin anywhere & can fetch full

It has been well said that it is by reading the thoughts of others we learn to think.



during in a week. Of course there are disciplinary studies which must be pursued by regular methods but these do not belong to our purpose. The reading of a single living book puts a man into the educated state. He becomes able to detect fallacies, see both sides of a question through all vulgar superstitions. In the reading of a single first-rate book, he emerges from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge. Perhaps it would be well to put general culture in the foreground & the immediate objects of the Association in the second place. The Chart should have newspapers, of course, representing both or other political parties with more or fewer public debates; occasional lectures, with discussions, on the rights & duties of a citizen, on the bringing up of children, on domestic or social economy. The pamphlets of the Association

would be read & discussed. But the aim of the society would rather be, I imagine, to give men the opportunity to form sane, wise & deliberate opinions & principles of right action & what is more important, of right thinking.

If such a plunge into the humanities could have suggested be good for poor men & women, it is also good for their children who are starved miserably during their school life on 'readers' & 'oral lessons'. It is possible to make the poor man's child a person of reading & reflection by the time he is seven, by the time he is twelve, he should have had a thought a good deal. But it is never too late to mend because education is a state which you may enter upon at any ~~point~~ port - by any route. Men must have knowledge if they are to be fully alive & it remains true that the proper knowledge for mankind is man & that the best avenues for this

knowledge are through history, literature & art. We should have the field ~~too~~ to ourselves if we were alone in the discovery that men crave for ideas ~~can always ready for them~~. The anarchist, the atheist, the extreme faddist are before us. They too know that men are ~~going about~~ agape for notions, & their success is due to the fact that, after listening to their specious arguments, a man's mind ~~sets~~ rises up for the first time, perhaps, with the sound conviction 'I have thought'. Men must think their thoughts upon out of the material they get hold of. The great opportunity of such an Association as this is to put within a man's reach material of the best & give him opportunities for discussion & expression. ~~So~~ Dried

instruction may come in also as I have indicated but it should take the second place. The main point is that man should use his mind as a tool working upon food material.

Let me strengthen my position by quoting some weighty words of Benjamin Kidd's.

For those reasons the Platonic idea of
life-long education should, I think, be embraced,
methodised organised, by an education
which aims at upholding the principles
of personal liberty & personal responsibility:

& State children, i.e., "the children who for one
reason or another are without parental
control"